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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Monday, September 18, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "WHY NOT BONE THAT ROAST?" Information from the Bureau of Animal Industry, U. S. Department of Agriculture. Publication available, Leaflet 74-L, Boning Lamb Cuts.

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The other day I had dinner at a friend's house. The meat was lamb. Roast shoulder of lamb. The host seized his carving knife and fork. Then he paused helplessly, looked at his wife, and asked, "Where do I start?" His wife looked equally puzzled. "I don't exactly know," she said. To me she apologized: "John never tried carving a shoulder before."

Finally, with much grumbling under his breath, John hacked off a few shapeless lumbs of the meat and put them on our plates. Delicious lumps of course, though not very attractive. I said nothing. But how much I wanted to say!

What I wanted most to say was: "You should have asked the butcher to bone the roast. The butcher could have rolled it up or sewed it in cushion style. Then you would have had no trouble carving."

Or if, for any reason, the butcher could not take the time to bone the roast, the housewife could easily have boned it herself. All that it takes is a small sharp knife and a little patience. Then the carver's temper would not have been subjected to any strain. An unboned lamb shoulder is somewhat difficult to carve, but it's a good buy, and it's all tender meat. And of course a thrifty housewife saves all the bones to cook for soup stock. So there's no waste.

But the fine points of boning all the different lamb cuts are explained in a government leaflet. Anyone can get that leaflet by writing to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and asking for leaflet 74-L, "Boning Lamb Cuts."

Perhaps you never thought of boning a leg of lamb, because it's not particularly hard to carve. But the meat goes farther in a roll, and you can cut it into attractive slices throughout the length of the roast. The same is true of the shoulder. Every part of each slice is tender and palatable, and looks well on the plate. Cold sliced boned roasts make excellent sandwich filling.

Another advantage of the boned roast--either shoulder or leg-- is that you can fill the cavity where the bones were with savory stuffing. The stuffing not only adds to the flavor but makes the meat go farther.

Some butchers will sell boned cuts already rolled and tied. The boned cuts command a higher price than the unboned cuts. And that is right. The meat alone must bring the same amount as the normal selling price of meat and bone combined. For example, a 7-pound untrimmed leg of lamb at 30 cents a pound costs $2.10. Trimming out the leg, tail, and other bone leaves about 5 pounds of meat. To bring $2.10 these 5 pounds must sell at 42 cents a pound. The butcher may also feel entitled to add a little to the price of the boned meat to pay for his time and trouble. So if you find that the unboned cut is considerably cheaper than a similar boneless cut, it may pay you to buy the unboned meat and bone it yourself. Then you will also have the bones to use for soup, gravy, aspics, and so on.

For boning, you need a small knife with a well-tempered blade about 4 or 5 inches long and not over half an inch wide. And keep that knife well sharpened. When it's not in use, fit a small cork over the point and wrap the blade in cheesecloth so it won't be used for any other purpose. Wipe and oil if after each using.

The chief technique in boning is to hold the knife close against the bone. It should slide along the bone, cut the muscles free, slip into the joints and cut the sinews, without gashing the meat. When you do that cleanly, you can lift the bone out without further trimmings. If a small amount of meat clings to the bones it will enrich the soup stock.

Now for that carver's problem— the boned shoulder. I'm not going to try to tell you in detail how to make the cuts. That's all in the leaflet I mentioned— No. 74-L. The lamb shoulder, as cut for the retail trade, is almost square. It contained 4 or 5 ribs, the shoulder blade, the round arm bone, and part of the neck. To bone it, you place it flat on the table with the fat side down and rib side up, and slip the knife under the ribs. With a little practice and study of the anatomy of the lamb's forequarter, you can soon locate and cut out the other bones.

The removal of the blade and shank bone leaves a pocket for the stuffing. Fill this pocket and sew the edges of it together before cooking if you plan to serve the roast cushion style. Then it will be practically square as it was before boning. If you want to roll the roast, you can add some stuffing but not so much as in a cushion style cut. Tuck in any irregular flaps of meat. Use enough strings on the roll so that it will remain shapely to the very end.

Have you ever tried serving a boned loin roast? That's a de luxe cut for some special occasion, like a family birthday party. Usually you buy the loin split down the center of the backbone and cut into chops. For roasting, both the loins are sold unsplit. This roast may be carved in long narrow strips parallel to the backbone. By boning out the backbone carefully, and rolling the meat, either with or without stuffing, you have one of the most delicious cuts you can get. It is carved across the roast instead of lengthwise as with the unboned loin.

Perhaps the moral of this whole chat is: Know your cuts of meat. So when the butcher shows you a sholder of lamb you can immediately see it on your table as an economical, easily carved, boned roast.

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